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SUBJECT: TURKISH VIEWS ON HANDLING IRAN AND SYRIA AT THE
IAEA BOARD OF GOVERNORS

REF: ANKARA 126

Classified By: CDA Doug Silliman for reason 1.4 (b, d)

Summary

1. (C) UNVIE Senior Advisor Andrea Hall, accompanied by Mission Turkey officers, met February 17 in Ankara with Turkish IAEA Governor Hakan Fidan and separately with the GOT Nonproliferation Task Force chaired by MFA Nonproliferation and Disarmament Deputy Director General Ahmet Gun to encourage strong Turkish statements on Iran and Syria at the upcoming IAEA Board meeting. Fidan and Gun underscored Turkey's opposition to an Iranian nuclear weapons program, insisted that Turkey deliver blunt messages in private to Iran's leadership, and urged the USG to engage Iran directly. Turkey believes Syria wants to come clean and rehabilitate itself and that the March Board can help "close the book" on the issue. Turkey claimed its Iran and Syria statements will track closely with the findings from DG ElBaradei's most recent reports. Gun also reiterated Turkey's general concerns about proposals on nuclear fuel access and guarantees as well as the draft NSG ENR guidelines, asserting that Turkey does not want to give up the right to pursue future energy-related fuel cycle technologies although it has no current intention to pursue enrichment. He asked the US to work with Turkey ahead of the next NSG meeting to find an acceptable compromise on the ENR guidelines. End Summary.

Fidan on Iran: Turkey will stay firm,
but US should engage Iran

2. (C) Senior Advisor Hall told Fidan that the USG wanted to consult closely with Turkey and other IAEA Board of Governors members to ensure statements at the March meeting would express clear support for the IAEA's ongoing investigation of safeguards concerns in Iran. The USG hopes Board members will make strong statements calling on Iran to cooperate fully with the IAEA and suspend all proliferation-sensitive nuclear activities, in accordance with its IAEA and UN Security Council obligations. Hall noted that that DG ElBaradei's most recent Iran report (circulated to Board members February 19) would confirm that: Iran has continued to ignore the IAEA's requests for cooperation, continued to enrich uranium at its Natanz enrichment facility, and may be close to producing enough low-enriched uranium gas to provide the fissile material for of a nuclear weapon if further enriched to weapons grade.

3. (C) Hall recalled the US Intelligence Community's 2007 NIE which assessed that although Tehran halted its nuclear weapons design and weaponization activities in 2003, it continues to pursue a uranium enrichment program to at a minimum keep open the option to develop nuclear weapons. She pointed to DNI Blair's February 12 Congressional testimony in which he asserted that Iran also continues to work on projects with commercial and conventional military

applications, some of which could be of limited use for nuclear weapons. Another important conclusion from the 2007 NIE, she added, was that strong, unified international pressure on Iran can change the Iranian regime's policy calculations. 2009 will be a critical year on Iran, she underscored. The IAEA Board and international community cannot afford to allow Iran to stonewall the IAEA's investigation. Board members must remain unified in keeping the pressure on Iran to fully comply with IAEA and UNSC requirements.

¶4. (C) Fidan welcomed consultations with the USG on Iran and outlined Turkey's views on Iran's nuclear program: Turkey strongly opposes an Iran with a nuclear weapons capability and fully supports and implements UNSC resolutions on Iran. Turkey recognizes that a nuclear Iran would be a threat to Turkey, to the region, and to the global nonproliferation regime. At the November 2008 Board meeting, Fidan said, Turkey's statement clearly called on Iran to cooperate fully with the IAEA. Turkey delivers even blunter messages to Iran in private and at the highest levels, he claimed, telling Iran that it would be "a disaster" for Iran and the region if it developed a nuclear weapons capability. Iran typically responds that its nuclear program is entirely peaceful and that a past religious fatwa prohibits Iran from seeking nuclear weapons.

¶5. (C) Turkey strongly opposes the use of force to stop Iran's nuclear program and believes that only a diplomatic approach can resolve the issue, Fidan emphasized. Turkey's overriding goal is to support a peaceful, stable Middle East. Fidan recounted a discussion with IAEA DG ElBaradei in

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November, in which ElBaradei insisted that it was up to states themselves, not just the IAEA, to find a solution that addresses both international and Iranian concerns. Turkey agrees, and believes that the only way to secure Iran's agreement to suspend its fuel cycle programs and cooperate with the IAEA is to make those goals part of a part of comprehensive agreement with the US and the international community. Fidan cited the Six Party talks with the DPRK as an indicator that diplomacy can work in tough cases. Such a comprehensive agreement would not be possible without direct USG engagement of Iran, Fidan surmised. Turkey would fully support and, if requested, facilitate such engagement. "We are always willing to help mediate or pass any messages." The DCM encouraged Turkey to continue working with and through the P5 1 and EU Council SG Solana.

¶6. (C) Hall explained that the USG was undertaking an Iran policy review which would take at least several more weeks to compete. However, the current administration remains focused on concerns about Iran's nuclear program and support for terrorism and remains committed to working with the P5 1 and other partners. Even as the USG's policy review continues, we want to ensure that IAEA Board members in March continue to encourage Iran to comply with UNSC obligations and cooperate fully with the IAEA. Fidan said the Turkish BOG statement had not yet been drafted, but said it would draw directly from the DG report's findings. Hall urged Fidan and the Turkish delegation to the Board also attend the Secretariat's planned technical briefing on its Iran investigations, as such briefings frequently provide useful information that does not necessarily appear in the DG's reports.

¶7. (C) DCM pointed out that the international community had already made a good faith effort to engage Iran in June 2006, submitting a proposal that would reward Iran with wide-ranging incentives and cooperation if it complies with UNSC obligations. Iran never replied constructively to that offer, even after U/S Burns joined P5 1 colleagues meeting directly with Iranian negotiators in Geneva in July 2008. Fidan suggested that Iran feels more secure now, with the USG

withdrawing from Iraq and tied down in Afghanistan. Iran also believes the USG is no longer considering a military option. Fidan noted that more international pressure on Iran could help compel Iran to approach possible engagement and negotiations more constructively. He urged that the USG and international community do more to "empower Iran's middle class" to gain more influence vis--vis Iran's hardliners in the military and clergy over Iranian foreign policy. Ultimately, Turkey hopes the USG will decide to engage Iran with "mutual respect" and consider offering Iran a "more comprehensive" settlement to resolve the nuclear issue and bring Iran back into the international community. "Turkey is ready to help," he said.

Syria: Ready to rehabilitate

18. (C) Turning to Syria, Fidan assessed that the 2007 Israeli strike against a suspected Syrian nuclear facility likely destroyed the Syrian program. "I doubt Syria has anything left. Now it is just a question of how to close the story." Turkey has "intensive" bilateral contacts with Syria, and believes Syria will not follow Iran's path of continuing to seek an undeclared nuclear capability. Instead, Turkey believes that Syria is ready to clean the slate and take steps to rehabilitate itself in the eyes of the international community. In that case, the DCM pointed out, Syria should take the immediate step of cooperating with the IAEA and allowing IAEA access to the three other requested sites. We hope Turkey will use the Board meeting to make that clear to Syria. Hall added that the previous DG's report on Iran strongly hinted that the destroyed site was indeed an undeclared nuclear reactor, a clear violation of Syria's safeguards obligations, and that Syria needed to come clean about the extent of that undeclared program.

19. (C) DCM explained that a decision by Syria to cooperate fully with the IAEA and come clean about its nuclear activities will improve its international standing. The USG wants Syria to act as a responsible member of the international community, but Syria must change its policies on its nuclear program and supporting terrorist groups. We hope Turkey at the IAEA Board will send a clear message to Syria on the steps it must take with the IAEA. Fidan took onboard our request, offering that if Syria is found to be continuing any undeclared nuclear activities, Turkey "would have big problems with that," but also argued that Turkey's November statement on Iran was tough.

110. (C) Fidan summarized that "Turkey goes by the book. We

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will base our position on the DG report's findings and Syria's safeguards obligations." He agreed that, pending review of the DG's report, Board members should encourage Syria to fully cooperate with the IAEA, come clean about its undeclared nuclear activities, and pledge to fully respect and implement its safeguards obligations. However, he cautioned, Syria would need confidence that the international community would not use its openness against it, for example by reporting Syria to the UNSC. "Fidan instructed his staff to have Turkey's IAEA delegation attend the IAEA technical briefings on both Syria and Iran, and pledged to consult closely with the USG delegation in Vienna.

Views from GOT Nonproliferation and Regional Experts

111. (C) We raised similar points on Iran and Syria with the Turkish inter-agency group convened by the MFA. The group, led by Deputy Director General for Arms Control and Disarmament Ahmet Gun, included representatives from the MFA, Customs, Turkish National Police, the Turkish General Staff and the Turkish Atomic Energy Agency, (TAEK). Gun and MFA South Asia Department Head Devrim Ozturk laid out Turkey's views on Iran's nuclear program, mirroring Fidan's earlier

remarks: Turkey opposes a nuclear weapons-capable Iran, but wants to see the conflict resolved diplomatically. "Either outcome -- a nuclear Iran or armed conflict with Iran - would be a disaster for us." Ozturk, who was DCM in Turkey's Tehran embassy until 2007, confirmed that Turkey was delivering blunt messages in private to Iran's leadership but avoiding harsh language in public, because the Iranian regime craves respect and reacts badly to harsh public language. "As you undertake your policy review, please consider the value of speaking in respectful tones; Iran listens to this." Gun underscored that Turkey supports and implements UNSC obligations on Iran, and looks to the IAEA reports as the primary source of international authority and legitimacy in assessing the status of Iran's nuclear program.

¶12. (C) Ozturk added that Turkey aims to balance its concerns about Iran with a stable bilateral relationship. He added that Turkey has important economic and commercial interests with Iran and enjoys wide people-to-people contacts with the Iranian population, hosting over one million Iranian tourists each year, although he acknowledged that the two governments have "irreconcilable world views." Turkey is the only NATO member that has regular high-level contacts with Iran, and thus could be useful if the international community needs assistance in conveying messages directly to Iran's leaders. Ozturk cautioned that any new international measures imposed on Iran before the June presidential elections could strengthen Ahmadinejad's re-election prospects. Turkey welcomes the campaign pledges from President Obama that he would consider seeking engagement with Iran "without preconditions" and hopes to see such engagement soon.

¶13. (C) Gun added that Turkey also takes its export control obligations seriously, citing the recent GOT decision to block the transit of a suspect Iranian shipment to Venezuela (reftel), and probed on whether the USG was considering modifying the "freeze-for-freeze" proposal. He also urged that if the USG is considering offering any form of regional security dialogue or other regional CSBMs, Turkey would like to be closely consulted. Hall replied that the USG welcomes clear, firm messages from Turkey to Iran, in public and in private, that Iran must meet its obligations. The more firm and unified the IAEA Board messages to Iran, the more pressure Iran will feel to comply. Until the USG's Iran policy review is complete, however, we cannot speculate on the nature of future offers, new incentives, or possible engagement modalities with Iran.

Syria: Engagement Urged

¶14. (C) Gun said Turkey highly values its bilateral relations with Syria and believes its experience hosting proximity talks gives Turkey a better understanding of how to engage Syria effectively. Syria has the ability to either positively or negatively affect the region. Isolating Syria will push it to act more negatively. Engagement will move Syria to act more constructively, and will pull Syria away from Iranian influence. Gun described Turkish IAEA Governor Fidan's November 2008 Board statement on Iran as tough, and pledged that Turkey will continue to call on Syria to cooperate fully. "But how you speak is as important as what you say."

¶15. (C) Gun asked for our views on Syrian claims that the uranium traces discovered by the IAEA at the site may have come from Israeli armaments. Hall said the US does not find

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this claim credible and hoped the IAEA would share a similar assessment with the Board in its report or technical briefing. Gun suggested that Israel should be encouraged to openly answer Syrian allegations on this. In addition, Gun felt that Syria allegations reflected the frustration of other countries in the region towards the west's

"double-standard" regarding Israel's nuclear program, and urged that Israel take steps to address those concerns.

Multilateral Fuel Guarantees

¶16. (C) Speaking candidly, Gun said Turkey had concerns about proposals for reliable access to nuclear fuel and that the USG proposal to review Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) draft guidelines for the transfer of enrichment and reprocessing technology was unhelpful to Turkey. Turkey supports the goal of preventing nuclear proliferation, but as a country seeking peaceful nuclear power, it is not willing to sign away its rights to technologies that it might eventually need to support its nuclear energy program. "No subjective criteria should be imposed on Turkey, which is a specific and special case." He added that Turkey expects written proposals from the USG in time to consider them. "We need to find mutually acceptable wording to paragraphs six and seven at the next NSG meeting in March. We are not looking to create a problem with the US, but this is a fundamental Turkish view." Moreover, he recalled when the US first shared the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) principles with Turkey, Washington only gave Ankara ten days to review and respond. "We felt very rushed." He noted that Turkey is still considering these proposals.

¶17. (C) Gun summarized Turkey's views on multilateral fuel supply and guarantees as follows: First, any such mechanism should not disrupt the international nuclear fuel market. Second, the IAEA's involvement in any such mechanism is indispensable. Third, the mechanism should be open to widespread participation on a voluntary basis. Hall confirmed that the USG shares those views, and pledged to convey Gun's concerns to USG.

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<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Turkey>

Jeffrey